United Nations S/2001/198

Security Council

Distr.: General
7 March 2001

Original: English

Letter dated 7 March 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith an aide-mémoire on the question of East Timor (see annex).

In this regard, it would be highly appreciated if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Makmur **Widodo**
Chargé d'affaires
Deputy Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 7 March 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

1. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia remains fully committed to responding constructively to Security Council resolution 1319 (2000). While maintaining close working relations with relevant United Nations organs, the Government of Indonesia has consistently taken comprehensive measures to resolve the remaining underlying issues that the tragic Atambua incident of 6 September 2000 brought to the forefront.

2. It is therefore a source of satisfaction that the facts on the ground today bear little resemblance to the conditions that existed prior to the aforementioned incident. Hence, any effort to depict the East Timorese refugees as continuing to languish in the camps in West Timor because they are being held against their will is baseless and without foundation. It has never been the policy of the Government of Indonesia to condone the illegal actions taken by the so-called militia to intimidate the refugees and/or to undermine security on the ground. In this connection, it is pertinent to point out that, under ad hoc arrangements and facilities provided by the Government of Indonesia, about 6,000 refugees have returned to East Timor of their own free will since September 2000. In addition, it is expected that several hundred refugees will be repatriated early this month. In addition, it should be noted that representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and various foreign embassies in Jakarta, as well as members of the German Parliament, visited West Timor recently, while members of the Portuguese Parliament are scheduled to arrive there in mid-March 2001. This would not be possible if the security situation on the ground was not conducive to their visits.

3. Indeed, there is an imperative need to comprehensively resolve the refugee issue once and for all, particularly in the light of the plight of the refugees in the camps. The Government of Indonesia has consistently been of the view that a multitude of explanations for the situation exist, some based on actual conditions, others on perceptions that have caused some hesitation on the part of the refugees to decide their own future. In this regard, it has called on all concerned to respect and recognize the individual rights of all East Timorese refugees and their respective motivations and reasons for deciding to be repatriated or to remain in Indonesia. Many of these considerations have centred around basic issues, such as shelter, education for the children and, of course, those relating to safety, security and liberty at their place of destination. The genuine concerns of the refugees need to be addressed and not simply brushed aside.

4. Indonesia is pleased to note that today there is increased recognition and acknowledgement that resolution of this issue depends as much on conditions in East Timor as they do on the situation in refugee camps in West Timor. In this regard, reconciliation among the East Timorese is vital, for it is the key to removing any actual or perceived hindrance for their return. It is also important in the context of ensuring a conducive atmosphere in the refugee camps since it offers an avenue to address a possible sense of despondency, frustration, loss of hope or abandonment among the refugees.

5. Equally important is the need to assure their right to access to assistance from the United Nations and international humanitarian relief agencies. However, the security designation of West Timor as "Phase-5" by the United Nations has virtually prevented the involvement and presence of relevant international agencies in providing humanitarian assistance to the refugees. The involvement and physical presence of international agencies are indeed urgently needed to help facilitate and monitor the registration of the refugees in order to guarantee their electoral rights in this year's national elections in East Timor, a process which the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) has officially announced will commence in March 2001. It would be deeply regrettable if thousands of refugees were rendered unable to participate in their country's historic transition to nationhood simply because of lack of registration facilities provided by the relevant organizations.

6. On its part, the Government of Indonesia has thus far positively responded to the suggestion by the visiting United Nations Security Council mission that the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) be invited to asses security conditions in West Timor. For this purpose, it has maintained regular contact with the designated official for security in Indonesia for all United Nations agencies. The prevailing realities, as stated above, can brook no further delay; it is time for the United Nations to take immediate action. The Government of Indonesia therefore requests that the United Nations dispatch its security experts from UNSECOORD at the earliest possible convenience. To date, however, it has yet to receive the formal response of the United Nations on this issue.

7. The Government of Indonesia feels obliged to once again request that the United Nations send its security assessment team to West Timor in order to re-rate the "Phase-5" security designation of the West Timorese refugee camps. The Government of Indonesia stands ready to discuss further the modalities and other detailed arrangements for such a visit and to extend its full cooperation to the visiting team.